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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the evolution of the concept of public service at land grant universities, pointing out the challenges confronted by these universities today and tomorrow and current challenges experienced in the areas of leadership and volunteer development. First, the evolution of the concept of public service at land grant institutions is traced from the 1862 Morrill Act establishing these schools through a 1985 survey of the National Association of State Universities of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges that showed 100 respondents agreeing on a single definition of "public service" (later cited by P. H. Crosson at a conference held in November, 1988). Specifically, the paper identifies challenges in the areas of: global interdependence and change, resource consolidation, the re-definition and re-commitment of ethics and values, the need for cooperative energy and "value-added" commitment, the application of knowledge and research, and expansion of the public base being served. Obstacles (structural, human resource, political, and symbolic) faced by a specialist in leadership and volunteer development are identified, and public service goals for such a specialist are named. These goals include: (1) serving as a professional link between the university community and the public; (2) serving as a resource for the generation, interpretation, and dissemination of knowledge; (3) stimulation of "value added" volunteerism; and (4) demonstration of leadership in interaction with the university and its public. Contains 18 references. (GLR)

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What Are the Public Service Goals and Responsibilities of a Specialist in Leadership and Volunteer Development at a Land Grant University?

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Abstract

The public service goals and responsibilities of a specialist in leadership and volunteer development at a land grant university stem from the public service commitment of the university itself. This presentation addressed the evolution of the concept of public service at land grant universities, pointing out challenges confronted by these universities today and tomorrow and current challenges experienced in the areas of leadership and volunteer development. The public service goals and responsibilities for a specialist in leadership and volunteer development at a land grant university were identified. (18 references) (Author)

Evolution of the Concept of Public Service at Land Grant Institutions

Land grant and state universities have traditionally offered educational programs in social and public responsibility designed to develop understanding and knowledge of public issues and problems facing the countries and its citizens both at home and abroad in economic, political, and social areas (Cote, Cote, & Walters, 1990; Kaplan, 1960). The concept of "public service" is a part of the institutional mission statements of "nearly every college or university" (Crosson, 1988). The concept itself has evolved over time.

Americans tended to look on higher education as a means for providing the knowledge and trained manpower that a rapidly

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> developing society required. In 1862 Congress embodied this spirit in the Morrill Act,[1] which offered grants of land to each state for the "endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be . . . to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanical arts, in such manner as the legislatures of the states may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life. (Bok, 1982, p. 62)

From this initial commitment to agriculture and the mechanic arts, colleges and universities gradually broadened and deepened their commitments to almost all aspects of human life, and social interaction. By the 1960's, the primary purpose of public service was to extend the knowledge and resources of higher education to individuals and groups who were not ordinarily part of the campus community. At that time, faculty members were called upon to to engage in public service activities in the spirit of brotherhood and good citizenship. By the 1980's faculty participation in public or professional service involved the "synthesis, application, and dissemination of knowledge" and built upon "expertise developed through research and instructional activities" (Crosson, 1988, pp. 14-15).

Florestano & Hambrick (1984) developed a "Faculty Performance Matrix" to access in the analysis of faculty performance in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and service. They defined "profession-related public

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1 Thomas Jefferson, a neighbor of my great, great, great grandfather in Albemarle County, Virginia, was outspoken in his efforts in educational leadership in the seventeen and eighteen hundreds (Conant, 1962).

service as "that service which requires the specialized education and experience that qualities a person to be a faculty member" (p. 18).

In a 1985 survey of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges,[1] 100 respondents agreed on the following definition of "public service."

> Public service is a programmatic relationship between a college or university and external groups to bring knowledge resources more directly and effectively to bear upon the identification, understanding, and resolution of public problems. The programmatic relationship will exist between the academic institutions and external agencies or organizations, public and private, at local, regional, state, and national levels. University knowledge resources may be delivered through training programs, workshops and seminars, continuing education, applied research, technical assistance, exchanges of personnel or other specially designed programs. Problems addressed may be related to policy in such areas as education, housing, energy, environment, government decision-making and operations, to name only a few, or the services may involve assistance with technical problems or technology transfer. (Crosson, 1988, p. 5).

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech),[2] the largest land grant university in the Commonwealth of Virginia,

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1 These institutions make the strongest commitment to public service and have the largest array of programs and activities. (Crosson, 1988, p. 4)

2 Adopted by the Board of Visitors of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University on August 5, 1986, and revised by the Board of Visitors on April 29, 1991. Extracted from The University Plan 1991-1996, p. 3.

originally opened its doors to 43 students in 1872. Virginia Tech recently revised its institutional mission and purpose statement to read:[1]

> Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, a publicly supported, comprehensive, land-grant university, serves the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the international community by generating and disseminating knowledge in the humanities, arts, and social sciences and in the scientific and professional disciplines through instruction, research, and extension. Inspired by its motto, *UT PROSIM* ("That I May Serve"), the university instills within each member of the university community an appreciation of the values and obligations of productive citizenship and the responsibilities of leadership while promoting personal and intellectual development. Its scholastic programs are accessible to all who demonstrate academic merit to gain entrance.
>
> To achieve this mission, as the university moves toward the year 2000, it will identify and build on strengths across the university, forge innovative and mutually productive relationships with industry and government, manage resources efficiently, and establish a clear identity as a forward-thinking, high-quality institution that systematically guides and evaluates its future.

Challenges Confronted by Universities Today and Tomorrow

1. Global Interdependence and Change

Naisbitt & Aburdene (1990) discussed the significant patterns of simultaneous and evolutionary change taking place on this planet. The

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1 Virginia Tech identifies itself as "*A Land-Grant University—The Commonwealth Is Our Campus*"

constant factor encountered by a person living in these times is permanent, rapid (and often geometric) change (Montgomery, 1992). For some people who have difficulty coping with rapid change, a consequence of this evolutionary change is a relatively high level of apathy, ignorance, and prejudice (Power, 1970; Toffler, 1971).

2. Consolidation of Resources (Doing More with Less)

Elson (1992), in visiting the "campus of the future," highlighted the dilemma faced by institutions of higher learning in which they are experiencing an increased demand for services at the same time as a decrease in available funding. Many universities are developing cooperative programs with other universities. All are encouraged not to duplicate services which are available elsewhere (Bok, 1982).

3. Re-definition and Re-commitment to Ethics and Values

This challenge is represented in two ways at institutions of higher learning. First is the more global sense of ethics and values. Daily media accounts call into question ethical practices affecting all professions. Values and priorities are in a process of change (Montgomery, 1992). Second, in a more specific sense, ethics and values of the institutions must also respond to the societal changes. While historically institutions of higher learning have placed priority on teaching and research (Ziegler, 1964), "as much value should be placed on interpretation and dissemination of new ideas as on original research" (Lynton & Elman, 1987, p. 2). The definition of specialization in instructional activities needs to be broadened to include an understanding of the context of the special expertise as well as "sensitivity to the human and ethical issues involved. In addition, what universities teach should be defined by content, not by clientele " (Lynton & Elman, 1987, p. 2).

As a part of this transition, universities must broaden their "system of values, priorities, and rewards for faculty so as to reflect the wider range of involvement with knowledge-based activities; . . ." (Lynton & Elman, 1987, pp. 2-3).

4. Need for Cooperative Energy and "Value Added" Commitment

One of the emerging paradigms affecting society calls for increased cooperation, a "win-win" focus, shared abundance, and multiple-option solutions rather than "either-or" choices (Montgomery, 1992). The "value-added" commitment consists of insuring that in each interaction in which he/she is involved, the person making the commitment adds value to the interaction exceeding that expected of him/her.[1] This "value added" concept is a form of volunteerism which can be applied equally well in business and voluntary associations.

5. Application of Knowledge and Research

Knowledge, and particularly advanced knowledge, constitutes the essence of universities. They are the societal institutions with the specific responsibility to create advanced knowledge, interpret it, and disseminate it. Hence, as the role of knowledge in society changes, universities need to respond accordingly. Their task remains the same: to be the prime source of intellectual development for society. But their task environment is changing drastically because the elements of society need to be able to use more forms of that knowledge on a continuous basis. Therefore universities need to change the ways in which they carry out their tasks. While continuing to devote themselves to the ongoing creation of new

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[1] A camper leaving the camp site in better shape than he/she found it demonstrates this "value added" concept.

knowledge, they increasingly need to apply both their resources and their expertise to other components of the complex process through which knowledge is absorbed by society. (Lynton & Elman, 1987, pp. 1-2)

6. Expanded Base of Public Served

In order to meet the needs of society in these changing times, universities need to enlarge their activities in the dissemination of knowledge, going beyond pre-existing geographic boundaries and traditional time frames and formats. They also need to adapt their traditional structures and procedures to accommodate new interrelationships among disciplines and a variety of knowledge transfer needs (Bok, 1982; Lynton & Elman, 1987).

Current Challenges in Leadership

The concept of "leadership" is constantly changing. There were four primary models of leadership in organizational analysis. The structural model, the human relations model, the political model, and the symbolic model (Bolman & Deal, 1984; Burks, 1992). Leadership theory has evolved from a study of personal attributes to a study of meeting organizational needs (Burks, 1992; Denham, 1978).

Bolman and Deal (1984) and Perrow (1986) provided insights in the study of complex organizations and interpretation of meaning. Bolman and Deal suggested that organizational theory should be viewed through four frames or images of leadership: Structural, human resource, political, and symbolic (Burks, 1992). According to Bolman and Deal, the successful manager in an organization, relies intuitively on the interpretation of four frames of reference, blending them into a coherent, pragmatic, personal theory of organizations" (1984, p. 6).

Learning by reflection on experience is an essential element discussed in quality improvement programs and in leadership development training (Montgomery, 1992). "Organizational change occurs within a larger environment and is the result of a combination of pressures exerted from both within and outside of the organization" (Cote, Cote, & Walters, 1990, p. 8). Only by learning from reflection on experience and by applying that learning in new situations, continuing the reflection process, can a leader and an organization be flexible and pro-active in adapting to a changing environment, expanding beyond pre-existing limits to thought and action.

Current Challenges in Volunteer Development

Due to increasing demands for time and other resources, volunteers and paid staff in voluntary associations and "for-profit" organizations are committed to "just doing their jobs." Encouraging "value added volunteerism" (i.e., encouraging each person to act on the motto "That I May Serve") is a critical need in both voluntary associations and in "for profit" organizations. When individuals go beyond what is expected of them "in search of excellence," they make a significant contribution to the betterment of the value present in the interaction in which they are engaged.

Volunteers in voluntary associations often have paid careers in other organizations. A recent study indicates that there is an overlap in the interactions in both "for profit" firms and volunteer association (Drobnic, 1992). Changes in one career frequently lead to changes in another career.

Current Obstacles seen through Organizational Frames of Reference[1]

- Structural: Confusion of Roles—Paid staff in voluntary associations are often in conflict with their boards of directors and their volunteers in terms of roles and supervisory relationships. This confusion of roles can lead to organizational dysfunction and loss of volunteers.

- Human Resource: No time for positive interaction—Everything becomes task-oriented and people who could help each other by cooperating to get jobs done faster withhold their assistance.

- Political: Conflicting Demands for Resources—Given the drastic shrinking of volunteer dollars and volunteer time and the growing need for these resources, "power" is often displayed in voluntary associations by competing with other departments in the same organization for what is perceived to be "scarce resources."

- Symbolic: Disappearance of Shared Values and Culture—The activities that formerly brought people together and gave them an experience of shared values and culture lose their priority status in favor of more direct activities, often connected with fund raising. Along with the disappearance of shared values

1 These were the organizational frames suggested by Bolman & Deal, 1984.

and culture goes the disappearance of the "joy" of volunteering. (This may also disappear in the face of the responses of some of the clients served by these voluntary associations. Demands and unreasonable expectations seem to be present in inverse proportion to the amount of money required of a client for services provided by the voluntary association.

Public Service Goals of a Specialist in Leadership and Volunteer Development at a Land Grant University

In view of the discussion presented above, primary public service goals and responsibilities of a specialist in leadership and volunteer development at a land grant university are:

1. Serve as a professional link between the university community and the public it serves to bring knowledge resources more directly and effectively to bear upon public problems.

This establishes the specialist in leadership and volunteer development as a direct extension of the university's public service mission (Cote, Cote, & Walters, 1990; Crosson, 1988; Florestano & Hambrick, 1984).

2. Serve as a resource for the generation, interpretation, and dissemination of knowledge.

This establishes the specialist as an integral part of the university community and the community's overall mission and purpose (Lynton & Elman, 1987; Virginia Tech, 1991).

3. Stimulate "value-added volunteerism" ("That I May Serve").

This factor lies at the heart of volunteerism. By stimulating the willingness to serve, the specialist creates the opening for all forms of follow-up action (how to serve, with whom to serve, etc.)

4. Demonstrate leadership in interaction with the university and the public it serves.

Practicing leadership, forward thinking, learning through reflection on experience, mentoring, all of these demonstrate application of knowledge in actual interaction with others (Burks, 1992; Denham, 1978; Montgomery, 1992; Virginia Tech, 1991). In order to facilitate the development of leadership the specialist needs to apply the knowledge gained in order to disseminate the knowledge effectively and to refine and add to his/her knowledge base.

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